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PAC MEET POSTPONED AS SEBI CHIEF MADHABI BUCH DOESN'T TURN UP

The Sebi chairperson skipped a Parliament's Public Accounts Committee meeting on Thursday, prompting panel head K C Venugopal to put it off

BUCH CITES 'EXIGENCIES' TO SKIP MEETING

Venugopal said the panel received a message from Buch at 9.30 am that she and her team wouldn't be able to appear before it due to "exigencies". The panel's proceedings remained deadlocked even during its second sitting amid the NDA members' demand that Venugopal allow a vote on agenda items like summoning heads of regulatory bodies, an idea opposed by Cong MPs

FURORE OVER JPC HEAD VENUGOPAL'S FIAT

- BJP member Nishikant Dubey moved a motion to drop five of the 161 subjects picked by the panel for its annual agenda, and called for a vote
- With NDA members in majority, Venugopal didn't allow the motion. BJP members accused him of not letting them air their views. They later met Speaker Om Birla to protest against Venugopal's unilateral decisions | P9

Trai chairman

BRIEFLY APPEARED BEFORE JPC BUT THE MEET WAS CALLED OFF DUE TO PROTESTS

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Falling fertility spells disaster for S India

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

RESEARCHERS have sounded alarm bells at the falling fertility rate in peninsular India, which will have a long-lasting impact on their demography, economy, social fabric and political representation at the Centre. "All South Indian states are staring at an irreversible crisis of falling fertility rates far below the national average of 2.1. Tamil Nadu has the lowest fertility rate at 1.4, followed by 1.5 in Andhra Pradesh (AP), Telangana and Kerala, and 1.6 in Karnataka. This is catastrophic as it is irreversible and has a long-lasting impact on demography, economy and political representation of these states in Parliament," said Srinivas Goli, associate professor, Department of Fertility & Social Demography, International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai. IIPS is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

As per the fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS5) data, only three states -- Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand -- have Total Fertility Rates (the average number of live childbirths a woman will have in her life) more than the replacement level of 2.1.

Recently, AP Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin drew attention to falling fertility rates in their states, and urged families to have more children. "No country in the world has succeeded in revoking birth rates, despite huge financial incentives to have children. South Indian states are equivalent to many developed countries in the world, but not in terms of per capita income, standard of living and human development indicators like health and education. Though their contribution to the country's exchequer is much more than the rest of India, they have lost out on their revenue shares from the Centre because of their lower populations. Fertility rate below 1.8 for a very long time will have a negative bearing on their economy," said the demographer.

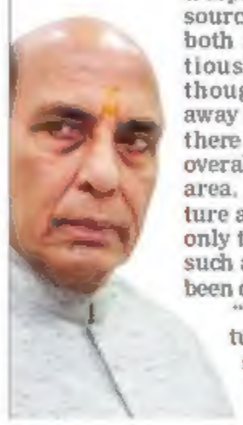
CONTINUED ON P5

PULLBACK BEGINS FROM DEPSANG AND DEMCHOK

GROUND SITUATION

Forces have moved away from stand-off points but remain in the vicinity, say sources

A broad consensus has been achieved by India and China on restoring the 'ground situation' along LAC, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said



MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

DAYS after India and China disclosed that an agreement has been reached to de-escalate the border tension, sources said on Thursday that troops from both sides have begun disengaging from the standoff points in Depsang and Demchok in Eastern Ladakh.

The troops have moved away from the points near the Y-Junction in Depsang and Charding Nullah Junction in Demchok, it is learnt. "But the troops remain in the vicinity," sources said, indicating that both sides are treading cautiously. In other words, although troops have moved away from the standoff points, there is no real change in the overall troop deployment in the area. Broadly, the infrastructure also remains the same as only the temporary structures such as tents and shades have been dismantled.

"The withdrawals are mutual. Patrolling may take some time to resume because it will depend on the removal of the structures which came up since the April 2020 clashes," said an official. Speaking at an event in Delhi on Thursday, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said a broad consensus has been achieved, which includes patrolling and grazing in traditional areas. This is the power of engaging in dialogue, he said.

While grazing grounds are only towards Demchok with the nullah in the vicinity, the landform is rugged and rocky towards Depsang, where there are significant patrolling points. Monday's agreement was about the two friction points, Depsang and Demchok. The strategic importance of Depsang is underscored by its proximity to the Y Junction, which is just 20 km from Daulat Beg Oldi airfield.

Control over Y Junction enables China to obstruct India's movements, which also serves as a link towards Siachen and the DBO airfield. The standoff at Depsang was significant, as the Chinese troops had blocked access to Patrol Points 10, 11, 11A, 12, and 13, covering an area of approximately 952 sq km.

MUDA PROBE

CM moves HC against single judge's order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday filed an appeal before the high court questioning the single judge's order upholding the governor's sanction to investigate him in the alleged irregularities in allotment of 14 sites to his wife BM Parvathy in Mysuru by MUDA.

Siddaramaiah filed the appeal with the registry of the high court a month after the order was passed by the single judge dismissing his petition against the governor's sanction to investigate him was issued on August 16.

On September 24, the single judge held that the complaints received by the governor undoubtedly need investigation against Siddaramaiah since he is, undoubtedly, behind the allotment of 14 sites worth Rs 56 crore to his wife by MUDA at 3rd Stage, Vijayanagar, Mysuru, for acquiring her land at Kesare village, which is far away from Mysuru city, for formation of a residential layout.

CONTINUED ON P4

Rly projects worth ₹6,798 cr gift-wrapped for Bihar & AP

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

IN a big push for infrastructure development in the NDA-ruled Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the Union Cabinet on Thursday approved one mega Railway project with a total estimated cost of ₹6,798 crore.

In another decision, the Cabinet approved the establishment of a Venture Capital Fund worth ₹1,000 crore for the space sector under the aegis of IN-SPACe to promote and oversee private sector participation in the sector.

Briefing the media after the Union Cabinet and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs met, Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, the two mega railway projects scheduled to be completed in five years will provide connectivity, facilitate ease of travel, minimise logistics costs, reduce oil imports and lower carbon emissions.

The projects involve doubling the Narkatiaganj-Raxaul-Sitamarhi-Darbhanga and Sitamarhi-Muzaffarpur sections, covering 256 km in Bihar with an estimated cost of ₹4,553 crore, and the construction of a new line between Errupalem and Namburu via Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, covering 57 km with an estimated cost of ₹2,245 crore, the minister said.

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw briefs the media on Thursday | PTI

The doubling of the rail line is expected to strengthen connectivity to Nepal, the Northeast and the border areas.

The new Errupalem-Amaravati-Namburu rail line will traverse through NTR Vijayawada and Guntur districts of Andhra and Khammam district of Telangana.

19-yr-old youth washed away in city stream

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A 19-year-old youth from Nadia district in West Bengal was washed away in the swollen Varthur stream on Thursday morning. Efforts are on to trace him.

Izharul SK was collecting plastic bottles that were floating on the stream when he was swept away.

According to R Kaleemullah, national executive member, Swaraj Abhiyan NGO, Izharul and his two uncles, who live in sheds near Varthur, went to collect plastic waste such as bottles and bags dumped near the stream around 9 am. The stream was in spate following heavy rain on Wednesday night. Izharul's uncles tried to pull him out of the swollen stream, but could not. Personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services Department and BBMP, who launched search operations, called them off late in the evening due to darkness.

They will resume the search on Friday, said a police officer.

ILLEGAL MINING

Cong MLA Sail among 7 convicted

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

A special court on Thursday convicted seven accused, including Karwar Congress MLA Satish Krishna Sail and managing directors of some mining firms, in illegal iron ore extraction and transportation cases. This the first verdict in cases related to illegal iron ore mining in the state.

Judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat pronounced the judgment convicting the accused in six cases guilty of offences punishable under the provisions of IPC and the Prevention of Corruption Act. He passed the order remanding the convicted, including Sail, to custody till the hearing on the quantum of sentence on Friday. The judge also cancelled their bail and surety bonds executed by them.

The convicted are Mahesh Biliye, the then port conservator; Satish Krishna Sail, MD of Sree Mallikarjun Shipping Private Ltd; Chethan Shah, managing director of M/s Ashapur Menechem; KV Nagaraj, director of Ms Swastik Steels (Hospet) Private Ltd; its former director KV Govindaraj; Mahesh Kumar K alias Kharadapudi Mahesh, partner of Shri Lakshmi Venkateshwara Minerals; and Prem Chand Garg, MD of Shri Lal Mahal Ltd.

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